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DR. LEWIS's

ELECTION SERMON,

MAY 11, 1797.

158

The political Advantages of Godliness.

A

SERMON,

PREACHED BEFORE HIS EXCELLENCY THE

GOVERNOR,

AND THE HONORABLE

LEGISLATURE

OF THE

STATE OF CONNECTICUT,

CONVENED AT HARTFORD

ON THE

ANNIVERSARY ELECTION.

MAY 11, 1797.

By Isaac Lewis, D. D.

PASTOR OF A CHURCH IN GREENWICH.

HARTFORD:

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1797.

At a General Aſſembly of the State of Connecticut, holden at Hartford on the ſecond Thurſday of May, Anno Domini 1797.

ORDERED, That the Hon. Joseph P. Cook and Col. Ebenezer Mead preſent the Thanks of this Aſſembly to the Rev. Isaac Lewis, D. D. for his Sermon, delivered at the anniverſary Election, on the 11th of May, inſtant, before the General Aſſembly, and requeſt a Copy thereof that it may be printed.

A true Copy of Record,

Examined,

By Samuel Wyllys, Sec'ry.

ELECTION SERMON.

I TIMOTHY iv. 8.

—*GODLINESS is profitable unto all things, having promiſe of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.*

IN all ſituations and conditions of life, true religion is of the firſt importance. It is the ſolace of thoſe, who are placed in the vale of poverty and affliction; the ſweetener of all the unambitious enjoyments, of the middle walks of private life; and the higheſt ornament to the perſons, and characters of the rich, the honorable, and the great. Without it, no man can be either truly, or laſtingly happy. Were this divine gueſt to be baniſhed from the ſociety of men, this world would become but the abode of folly and wretchedneſs; and man, with all his boaſted reaſon and ſuperiority, inferior, in point of real enjoyment, to the herds who graze the fields.

THE ſentiments of St. Paul on this ſubject, are clearly expreſſed in our text and context. After cautioning Timothy to avoid perplexing himſelf and

others, with the fabulous traditions of the Jews, and their endleſs genealogies, and exhorting him, like the athleticks in the Grecian games, to exert his uttermoſt labor and diligence, in purſuing and promoting the doctrines and duties of true piety, as an argument to enforce the whole, he introduces the words of our text. *Godlineſs is profitable unto all things, having promiſe of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.*

THESE motives to godlineſs, though firſt addreſſed to Timothy, apply with equal force and propriety to all men, of every age and condition. The import of the text is briefly *this*, "Godlineſs is every way advantageous. Whoever ſhall experience the power of it, will thence derive a rich harveſt of gain. Beſide the crown of immortal glory, which it infallibly ſecures to its poſſeſſor, it will produce the higheſt ſatisfaction, of which the human mind is capable, in the preſent ſtate of exiſtence. Its advantages are eminent in all ſtations, and ſituations, and in the proſecution of every buſineſs, proper to engage the attention of mankind."

IF then godlineſs have promiſes of good to be enjoyed in this life, as well as in that which is to come, if it be profitable unto *all things*, we may doubtleſs with ſafety conclude, that effectual aid may be derived from it, in the adminiſtration of civil government; and that, if generally and faithfully practiſed, it would moſt eſſentially contribute toward obtaining for, and ſecuring to a community, all the important ends of its inſtitution.

To illuſtrate *this obſervation*, is the propoſed object of the preſent diſcourſe. Preparatory to which, a conciſe view of the nature of godlineſs, and of the ends of civil government will firſt be taken.

GODLINESS is a term uſed in two ſenſes; the one limited, and the other more general. In its limited ſenſe, it includes only the duties of piety toward God. In its general ſenſe, it compriſes all the duties preſcribed by the chriſtian religion; thoſe which we owe to our fellow-men, and to ourſelves, as well as thoſe which we owe to God. The apoſtle, in our text, uſes the term in its moſt general ſenſe, as appears from the extenſive benefits, which, he aſſures us, will flow from a faithful practice of its various duties. Theſe duties cannot now be minutely detailed. It may however be proper to obſerve in general, that they may be divided into four claſſes, the duties we owe to God, to Chriſt, to our fellow-men, and to ourſelves.

IN the firſt of theſe, are compriſed ſupreme love to God, a fixed dependance on, and a humble truſt in him, a cordial ſubmiſſion to his providential diſpenſations, together with conformity to his revealed will.

IN the ſecond, are included faith in the mediator, accompanied with a daily and ſincere attention to him, conſidered as our teacher, our example and lawgiver, our advocate and interceſſor with the father.

IN the third, are contained univerſal love to mankind, mercy, juſtice, beneficence, truth and the forgiveneſs of injuries.

THE fourth, comprehends the graces of humility, meekneſs, prudence, fortitude and ſelf-government.

ALL the before mentioned virtues are briefly comprehended, by our divine maſter, in the following expreſſive words. "Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyſelf." *Theſe* unitedly conſtitute that godlineſs, which

is urged on us in our text, as being every way conducive to the advancement, of all the important intereſts of mankind.

But in order to determine, how far godlineſs contributes to the obtainment of the great ends of civil inſtitutions, it will be neçeſſary to enquire what thoſe ends are? Or what are the great objects, all governments ought to purſue, and which all good governments actually do purſue, though with different degrees of ſucceſs? Theſe, it is ſuppoſed, may be all comprehended in the following particulars.

1. The primary object of civil inſtitutions is to prevent thoſe evils, which, conſidering the depravity of mankind, would certainly reſult from a ſtate of nature.

Selfishness is the predominant principle of fallen man. This, by being ſupreme, neceſſarily excludes the fear of God, and benevolence to our fellow-men. And among a number of individuals, ununited by any ſocial compact, would produce a ſtate of conſtant mutual hoſtility. In ſuch a ſituation, jarring intereſts would at once enkindle the fire, and conſtantly fan the flame of diſcord; and of courſe baniſh peace and ſecurity. No protection, except what may be derived from perſonal proweſs, can be obtained by individuals, in a ſtate of nature. Life and property are equally inſecure. Indeed without ſome kind of civil aſſociation, the laſt muſt be extremely limited. The power of an individual, unaſſiſted by thoſe arts, which flouriſh only under the protection of civil government, is wholly incompetent to the acquiſition of more property, than a bare ſufficiency for a ſcanty ſubſiſtence. But admitting the poſſibility of acquiring conſiderable property in a ſtate of nature, ſtill it would only ſerve to invite plunder, and lawleſs invaſion. The more one poſ-

ſeſſed, the greater would be his danger. And if his ſtrength ſhould prove ſufficient, to reſiſt a ſingle invader, it muſt unavoidably yield to the ſuperior force of a combination of thoſe, who would chooſe to live by rapine, rather than ſubmit to the toils of daily labor.

THE evils to which men would unavoidably be expoſed, in a ſtate of nature, we may learn from thoſe, which have ever been attendant on revolutions. During ſuch changes there is ever a period, in which laws loſe their influence, and licentiouſneſs prevails. This reign of anarchy is at its moſt alarming criſis, in that ſtage of a revolution which intervenes, between the deſtruction of the old, and the eſtabliſhment of new principles and maxims of government. It is probable that no revolution was ever effected in any country, with leſs of theſe evils, than the recent one here in America. In our own State, very few diſorders appeared; owing perhaps principally to the inconſiderable alterations, which the revolution produced. But in ſome parts of the union, the moſt fatal evils were experienced. Law was no longer a reſtraint, right no longer regarded, property was invaded, virtue inſulted, chaſtity polluted, and life ſacrificed, by abandoned ruffians, who, having broken over every reſtraint, rioted on the ſpoils of their innocent neighbours. Under an inexpreſſibly more dreadful experience of theſe, and many other ſimilar evils, it is well known, one of the principal kingdoms of Europe, has for ſeveral years been groaning.

THESE things have been mentioned, ſolely with a view of exhibiting a ſpecimen of what may be expected from a ſtate of nature. To prevent their exiſtence, as far as poſſible, to ſecure to individuals the peaceable poſſeſſion of life, liberty and property,

is a primary object of civil government. And its tendency to accompliſh this purpoſe, undoubtedly wrought a conviction of its abſolute neceſſity, in the minds of men, in the early ages of the world.

2. ANOTHER object worthy of the purſuit of government, is the promotion of the greateſt good of the whole community, ſo far as that may be effected, without injury done to others.

PRIVATE intereſt, or the good of an individual, farther than it may be conſidered as involved in the good of the whole, ought not to be, and cannot conſiſtently be the object of the ſocial compact. As the whole is greater than its parts, ſo the good of a community is greater than the private intereſt of any individual. And to cauſe a greater intereſt to ſuffer, for the purpoſe of advancing a leſs, is a violation of the order of nature, and of the laws of equity and reaſon. A community is but one great family; in which, every member ought to conſider his own intereſt, as involved in that of the whole; and this whole ought to ſwallow up every private or detached intereſt. As no private family can be happy, where each member is actuated ſolely by a principle of ſelf-gratification; as ſuch a line of conduct will produce a conſtant claſhing of intereſts, which will unavoidably iſſue in contention and animoſity; ſo no ſtate can enjoy political happineſs, where the public good is neglected, and an attachment to private, becomes the ruling paſſion. Hence cabals are always injurious, and ought to be oppoſed and even deſpiſed, as deſtructive of the great ends of civil ſociety. They invariably have for their object, ſome party deſign. And the ſetting up of ſuch an intereſt as the principal object of purſuit, is in the nature of it, hoſtile to public good. Private emolument cannot be ſet in competition with public, without endangering the latter. And to endanger the

public good, for any private advantage, is always to ſacrifice the greater intereſt to the leſs.

FROM theſe obſervations it appears, that the good which ought to be the object of government is the public good; and that in competition with it, no private or party intereſt ought ever to be placed.

BUT it is further to be obſerved, that although the greateſt good of a community, ought to be the leading object of its government, yet even *this* is not to be purſued, by ſuch meaſures as are injurious to other communities. Although the intereſt of an individual may be ſacrificed, where it is abſolutely neceſſary to promote the greateſt good of the public, of which he is a member; yet it by no means follows, that a ſtate or kingdom, in order to promote its own advantage, poſſeſſes a right to adopt ſuch meaſures, as are injurious to a ſiſter ſtate. It is as inconſiſtent with every rule of moral obligation, for one ſtate to commit injuſtice againſt another, as it is for an individual to rob or plunder his neighbour. All mankind are brethren, the children of the ſame common parent. Different ſtates are correlatives of each other. The great chriſtian law which preſcribes our duty toward our neighbours, conſidered in our individual capacity, will, if obſerved, regulate the conduct of ſtates toward each other.

ALTHOUGH politicians have burdened the ſcience of government, with many intricacies, which may, not improperly, be called the chicanery of courts; yet, if inexperience may be permitted to riſk an opinion, we ſhould ſay that it is reducible to a few plain principles. To love our neighbour as ourſelves—To do to others as we would that they ſhould do to us, are rules of moral conduct as applicable to communities, as to individuals. Nor can

any reaſon be aſſigned in juſtification of fraud, injuſtice, oppreſſion, or cruelty in a body of men, more than in a ſingle perſon. On the contrary, where a body of men practiſe injuſtice, the crime is far greater, than a ſimilar act of injuſtice performed by an individual: becauſe in the one caſe, the guilt is confined to a ſingle ſubject, and in the other, it extends to a whole community; and becauſe the evil conſequences of public injuſtice, and the injuries done by it, are far more extenſive, than thoſe of private. When one nation is guilty of injuſtice towards another, thouſands and millions may feel the injury. It is not in human power to calculate the evils, which will follow one deliberate act of ſuch injuſtice. It will be readily granted, that the evils of private injuſtice are many. Among theſe may be enumerated expenſive law-ſuits, the diſaffection of families to each other, and all the uſual conſequences of private hatred. Yet admitting the worſt that can follow, the civil law is a barrier, which will always check and reſtrain theſe evils, and confine them within certain limits. But when one nation practiſes groſs injuſtice againſt another, there is no common arbiter, either to decide the contention, or to control its deſtructive effects. War commonly burſts forth like a ſweeping deluge, overwhelming and confounding the innocent with the guilty; and inflicting on whole countries greater, and more durable calamities, than any of the uſual ſcourges, by which heaven corrects the madneſs of mankind.

The foregoing obſervations ſufficiently prove, that national injuſtice is far more criminal in itſelf, and far more fatal in its conſequences, than private. And of conſequence, that the ſame moral rule of righteouſneſs, which the ſcriptures have preſcribed to individuals, and by which they are bound to regulate their conduct, ought to be adopted by nations, and faithfully adhered to, in all their treatment of

each other. Hence will appear the juſtice of the remark before made, that although the greateſt public good of a community, ought to be the end of its government, yet even that object, great and important as it is, ought never to be purſued, by means, which involve in them, a violation of the rights of other nations.

But notwithſtanding the evident truth of this remark, it is to be lamented, that a policy directly repugnant to the rules of moral juſtice, has been too prevalent among all nations. The Roman love of their country, ſo much the boaſt of her citizens and ſo highly celebrated by her beſt writers, even in the pureſt days of that republic, was but a ſelfiſh contracted principle. Its object was the aggrandizement of their commonwealth, not only without any regard to the happineſs of other nations, but at the expenſe of their liberties, privileges and independence. Their love of their country, led them to deſtroy, or at leaſt to ſubjugate every neighbouring ſtate, which ſtood in the way of the enlargement of their empire, or whoſe intereſt was inconſiſtent with their own ambitious views. Juſtly were they characterized by the ſpirit of propheſy as *a beaſt dreadful and terrible, and ſtrong exceedingly; as devouring and breaking in pieces, and ſtamping the reſidue with their feet.*

It is with the deepeſt regret, that truth obliges us to confeſs, that too ſimilar to this deteſtable example, has been the policy of modern, as well as ancient nations. While the rulers of kingdoms have been careful to inculcate mutual juſtice among their ſubjects, by wiſe and ſalutary laws, they appear to have forgotten that national juſtice is a virtue; or not to be ſenſible, that there is any thing criminal in injuring a neighbouring ſtate, where the power of doing it is poſſeſſed, and an opportunity offered.

While the private robber, who forces from an individual a ſmall ſum, muſt expiate his crime on a gibbet, it has been but too common for one nation to rob another of whole provinces, not only without cenſure, but with a tribute of praiſe for their martial atchievments. To this fatal ſource, the injuſtice of nations toward each other, is to be attributed the awful ſcourge of war, with all its dreadful calamities. If the cauſe could once be ſuppreſſed, the effect would ceaſe; and the prophecy of univerſal peace, ſo frequently repeated in the ſacred writings, meet with an immediate accompliſhment. The inſtruments of war would then be converted into implements of huſbandry; nation would not lift up ſword againſt nation, nor would they learn war any more.

THESE few remarks on national injuſtice have been made, to call to the minds of this audience, the evils, which muſt neceſſarily reſult from the prevalency of that unjuſt policy, which leads a nation to advance her own intereſt, by acts of injuſtice done to others. And likewiſe for the purpoſe of explaining in what ſenſe, the public good ought to be the object of political inſtitutions. To avoid the evils of a ſtate of nature, and to promote the greateſt national happineſs, have been mentioned as the proper ends of government. Theſe, are conſidered as including not only the particular objects, which have been brought up to view in what has been ſaid, but whatever tends to the proſperity of a nation.

WE will now proceed to enquire, what advantages, in the purſuit of theſe ends, may be derived from the practice of godlineſs.

1. GODLINESS will be productive of national felicity, by ſecuring the fidelity of rulers.

THAT national happineſs and miſery, are cloſely connected with the character and conduct of thoſe who hold the reins of government, approaches nigh to a ſelf-evident propoſition. At leaſt it is a truth which a very little argumentation will ſupport, and which has been fully confirmed by all hiſtory, both ſacred and profane. The government of an Ahab, and a Manaſſeh, of a Nero and a Caligula, afford unequivocal proofs of the miſery of a people, deſtined to endure the ſcourge of wicked and tyranical rulers. "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice, but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn." An unprincipled magiſtrate is regardleſs of the public good, and wholly under the influence of ſelfiſh and mercenary views. In ſuch hands neither the property, the liberty nor the life of the people are ſecure. *Theſe* may, and moſt probably often will be ſacrificed to the luſt, the ambition, the avarice, and even the caprice of the tyrant. The public good is unſpeakably too precious a depoſite, to be betruſted to ſuch men. He who diſregards the obligations he is under to his God, cannot be ſuppoſed ſuitably to feel thoſe which he is under to his fellow men. He will rather be led to conſider his exaltation to office, as raiſing him above the reſtraints, laid upon his unofficed brethren, and as affording him an opportunity for indulging with impunity, the ſelfiſhneſs and wickedneſs of his heart. A ruler deſtitute of virtue, will without doubt in a greater or leſs degree be guilty of malepractice. And a government badly adminiſtered, will produce evils introductory, both to public and private infelicity. There is an inſeparable connexion between the moral character of rulers, and their adminiſtrations. If the former be vicious, corruption will appear in the latter, and a corrupted adminiſtration militates againſt the very ends of the ſocial compact. And of courſe is inconſiſtent with the happineſs of a community.—

The liberties of a nation are always extremely unſafe, in the hands of vicious rulers; and the miſeries which nations have ſuffered under the government of ſuch characters, are to be ranked with the heavieſt of divine judgments.

If then vice in authority be deſtructive of public felicity, it is but rational to conclude that virtue exalted to power, muſt be productive of directly contrary effects; and that a pious magiſtracy muſt afford the moſt encouraging proſpect, of national happineſs. The magiſtrate, who to the natural and acquired abilities neceſſary to prepare him for office, adds the fear of God, a reverence for the dictates of his own conſcience, and that love to his fellowmen, implied in true godlineſs, will not fail to make the good of his conſtituents, the ultimate object of his political purſuits. His example will uniformly be in favor of virtue, and his abilities ſteadily exerted to ſupport and maintain that "righteouſneſs which exalteth a nation, and to diſcountenance and ſuppreſs that vice which is a reproach to any people." As a legiſlator, he will diſregard local prejudices and party views, and ever give his voice in favor of ſuch laws, as he believes to be founded in juſtice and public utility; and oppoſe with firmneſs, and uncorruptible integrity thoſe of an oppoſite tendency. As a judge, his deciſions will be guided by law and equity, without partiality for, or prejudice againſt any man. In whatever ſtation he is called to ſerve his country, he will remember that he is accountable for his conduct not only to his fellow citizens, but to the ſupreme ruler of the univerſe; that he has a moſt important truſt committed to him; that he is a miniſter of God, for good to his people; that the primary deſign to his honorary appointment, was to capacitate him to employ all his talents, in promoting and diffuſing happineſs through the community; and that he

anſwers the great end of his being called into office, only ſo far as he ſteadfaſtly purſues this grand object. And that a greater proportion of happineſs will be enjoyed by a people, where their rulers are actuated by ſuch diſintereſted motives, than where they are influenced by ſelfiſhneſs, is too evident to need proof. It is as unneceſſary to prove, that men of piety are not only the moſt likely to purſue the public good, but the only characters, from whom we have reaſon ſteadily to expect, ſuch diſintereſted conduct. Nothing can afford ſo great a ſecurity for the fidelity of rulers, as godlineſs. Other motives may for a time produce unexceptionable conduct. But the influence of theſe other motives will be ever uncertain, and at beſt ſubſervient to ſelfiſh views. The public good will always be abandoned by ſuch a mind, whenever it is conſidered as directly oppoſed to private intereſt.

No men, in any ſituation or employment, are ſo ſenſible of the obligations they are under to fidelity as the truly religious. No others ſo fully perceive its importance, or are ſo deeply impreſſed with a conviction of its neceſſity. Religion is a crown of glory to all who poſſeſs it. It does not of itſelf prepare men for office, either in church or ſtate. But where they are otherways prepared, the addition of true religion, above every thing, contributes to their fidelity and uſefulneſs. This obſervation applies with as much propriety, and force to the civil magiſtracy, as to any official characters. Fidelity in that office, is eſſential to national proſperity. So that godlineſs, when it lives and reigns in the hearts and lives of the magiſtrates of a country, contributes directly, and moſt eſſentially to the public happineſs.

2. GODLINESS is no leſs ſalutary to a community, by the influence, which it has on the great body of the people.

As it ſecures the fidelity of rulers, ſo it makes good citizens. If its practice could once become univerſal in a nation, it would produce ſuch a conduct in all ranks, as would iſſue in general proſperity. So far as national happineſs depends, on the promotion of the ſocial virtues—on the cultivation of benevolence, kindneſs, juſtice and charity—on the prevalence of harmony and tranquillity, the practice of godlineſs has a direct tendency to its advancement. Godlineſs teaches us to do juſtly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with God. To owe no man any thing, but to love one another. To render to all their dues, tribute to whom tribute, cuſtom to whom cuſtom, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor is due. And, to comprehend the whole in few words, to love our neighbour as ourſelves. So far as theſe virtues promote public happineſs, or are any way conducive to the proſperity of a nation; ſo far the ſalutary influence of godlineſs is indiſputable. As it reſpects the duties of the ſecond table of the law, it conſiſts in the exerciſe of theſe very virtues. And how far the practice of them actually does contribute to national proſperity, we may learn from the evils which their oppoſite vices never fail to produce. Fraud, injuſtice, anger, wrath and hatred are moſt evidently the bane of ſocial happineſs; and in proportion to their prevalency, are invariably productive of miſery. The practice of theſe virtues then, and conſequently of true godlineſs, has a direct tendency to promote the public good.

Again, ſo far as national happineſs depends on a ſuitable conduct in the members of a community, toward each other, it is directly promoted by godlineſs. The circumſtance laſt mentioned, it is well known, has great influence on domeſtic happineſs. It is eſſential to the proſperity of a private family, that the conduct of each member be regulated by

the ſtricteſt rules of propriety—that the heads conduct with a dignity becoming their ſtation; equally remote from unreaſonable auſterity on the one hand, and trifling familiarity on the other—that children and ſervants, conſtantly exhibit reverence and reſpect, by an unreſerved and cheerful obedience. Imprudence and folly in the governors of a family, and obſtinacy and diſobedience in the inferior members, are utterly deſtructive of domeſtic felicity. And why ſhould not the caſe be the ſame with larger communities? The happineſs of a nation is compoſed of ſimilar ingredients with that, of a private family. And as the conduct of the ſeveral members of the latter, toward each other, has ſo evident an influence on their happineſs, why muſt not the proſperity of a nation be greatly affected, by the mutual conduct of its rulers and ruled? If ſo, godlineſs muſt certainly promote national felicity. For it influences rulers to rule in the fear of God, and unofficered citizens to reverence and reſpect the magiſtrates of their country, as miniſters of the Moſt High, appointed for the good of his people. So far as it extends, it leads every man to conduct agreeable to his ſtation; to abide in, and faithfully to diſcharge the duties of his particular calling, and thus to contribute to the advancement of the general felicity.

But I take the liberty of farther obſerving, that godlineſs promotes national proſperity, as it contributes to an increaſe of wealth. If any ſhould call in queſtion the truth of this obſervation, let me deſire him to remember, that there are few vices but what are luxurious; that they are expenſive, and even prodigal both of time and money; and that thoſe which are moſt corrupting, which ſpread their contagion the moſt rapidly, which ever have and ever will prevail where godlineſs is neglected, are not only ſuch as devour property, but ſuch as introduce

diſeaſe, debility, idleneſs, and even an averſion to every ſpecies of labor, and thus dry up the very ſources of national wealth.

On the other hand, godlineſs leads to temperance, health, induſtry and frugality. It not only retrenches the expenſes of extravagance, but it adds to the ſtock already poſſeſſed, the daily gains of diligence. From the command and example of her divine teacher, ſhe gathers up the fragments, and ſuffers nothing to be loſt.

If, after conſidering theſe particulars, any ſhould ſtill be diſpoſed to doubt, whether a general diffuſion of godlineſs through a nation, would contribute more to the increaſe of its wealth, than the unreſtrained reign of vice, let him compare the expenſes of the ſeveral virtues included in true godlineſs, with thoſe of their oppoſite vices. Let him for inſtance compare the expenſes of humility, temperance and frugality, with what would be neceſſary to ſupport pride, luxury, intemperance and prodigality, and the compariſon will convince him, that it is vice which drains a nation of her wealth. We venture further to offer it as a decided opinion, that if ſuch a perſon ſhould judge with impartiality, he would meet a conviction, that the faſhionable vices of the preſent day, are far more expenſive than the ſupport of government, together with all the public and private means of literary, moral and religious inſtruction. The univerſal ſpread of godlineſs among us, would ſave this enormous expenſe, and thus increaſe the pecuniary advantages of our nation. So true is it that godlineſs is profitable unto *all things*, having promiſe of *the life that now is*, and of that which is to come.

But permit me to add, that godlineſs, above every other principle that can be named, gives efficacy

to the laws of a nation. Among many other ingredients, neceſſary to the happineſs of a people, a good code of laws will doubtleſs be included. But ſimply the exiſtence of ſuch a ſyſtem of laws, will be but of little advantage, unleſs they are ſacredly regarded—unleſs they poſſeſs a commanding influence on all ranks of citizens. Laws, that have loſt their influence, neither afford protection to the virtuous, nor lay reſtraint on the exceſſes of the vicious. And laws diſregarded and trampled on with impunity will ever loſe their influence. Of conſequence, the ſupport of law, by giving it as extenſive an obedience as poſſible, and by putting its penalty in execution on delinquents, muſt be of high importance to national proſperity. And yet no part of civil government is attended with more, or greater difficulties. Men of true piety will ſee, and feel the importance of giving efficacy to laws, and from the pureſt motives, throw their whole weight into that ſcale.—They will obey the ordinances of man for the Lord's ſake. But the vicious part of every community are always impatient under the reſtraints of law; and ready to violate it, whenever they can flatter themſelves of doing it with impunity. Hence the well known fact, that laws are trampled upon, in proportion to the increaſe of vice. The more groſs wickedneſs prevails, the more are all laws divine and human diſregarded. The inference from this fact is plain, that no principle can give ſuch an efficacious influence to the laws of a nation, as true godlineſs. There is a cloſe connection between fidelity to God, and fidelity to man; he who poſſeſſes the former will not neglect the latter. Conſequently the diffuſion of true religion through a nation, would in this reſpect, be attended with a moſt happy influence.

But it is worthy of further remark, that godlineſs not only contributes to the maintenance and

ſupport of law, by its influence on the hearts and lives of its true friends; but the doctrines of revealed religion, have a happy political effect on all who believe them, even with a ſpeculative faith. The corruptions of mankind, it is believed, are far more reſtrained, from an apprehenſion and dread of future puniſhment, than from all the penalties, which ſanction the ſeveral codes of human laws. Revealed religion denounces future wrath, not only againſt perſons guilty of impiety toward God; but againſt murderers, thieves, adulterers, perjured perſons, and all who commit crimes againſt ſociety. So far as divine revelation is believed—ſo far as it gains even an hiſtorical aſſent from mankind, the idea of this future puniſhment, muſt operate as a forcible check to human corruptions. Theſe penalties, admitting the authenticity of the ſcriptures, are known by the impenitent to be unavoidable, and therefore affect the mind as realities. No concealment, no fraud, no flight, can protect the offender from the vengeance of the judge. If the ſinner dies in impenitency, he muſt unavoidably ſuffer the dreadful conſequences. But men can eaſily eſcape the penalties of human laws. Under the beſt executed government, the probability is that they are actually avoided in more inſtances, than ſuffered by tranſgreſſors. The means of eſcaping civil puniſhments are very numerous, and perfectly known to the moſt vicious part of every nation. So that human laws are always tranſgreſſed with a hope of impunity. If then all dread of future puniſhment were totally annihilated, the ſtrongeſt ſupport of civil law, would be removed, and very little be left to reſtrain the corruptions of the vicious. And the conſequence might be an abſolute impoſſibility of ſupporting civil government.

From the foregoing obſervations we may at leaſt conclude, that godlineſs is not only highly advanta-

geous, but that, a belief of its doctrines, and eſpecially thoſe which reſpect the divine character and future rewards and puniſhments, are eſſential to the well being, if not to the exiſtence of civil ſociety. And it is a well known fact that all antiquity were in favor of a ſimilar ſentiment. Not a ſingle legiſlator has ever attempted to enforce obedience to his laws, ſolely on the foundation of civil ſanctions. They univerſally perceived the inſufficiency of theſe motives, unaſſiſted by thoſe derived from religion. And as they were ſtrangers to divine revelation, they formed a ſubſtitute, and adapted it, as well as they could, to the circumſtances, the genius, and the prejudices of their people. Lycurgus, Solon, Numa Pompilius, Capac, and every legiſlator, at all famed for the wiſdom of his inſtitutions, found it neceſſary to have recourſe to religion; and, in fact, derived from that ſource, the principle motives to enforce obedience. This ſhows, that in the judgment of theſe eminent men, the belief of a ſupreme Being, and the practice of ſome religion, are of great importance to the ſupport of civil government; and that it is in vain to expect that a ſyſtem of laws can be maintained for any conſiderable period, independent of all aſſiſtance of this kind. An opinion, as is confidently ſuppoſed, founded in a very accurate, and extenſive knowledge of human nature, and which, we cannot but preſume, will be ever found true, as long as ſinful paſſions and affections poſſeſs ſuch an influence on mankind.

If then ſome religion has ever been found neceſſary to the exiſtence of civil government; if where the true religſon has been unknown, the ableſt legiſlators have thought it neceſſary to invent a ſubſtitute; if even an hiſtorical belief of the doctrines of revealed religion, have ſo direct a tendency to ſupport civil inſtitutions; certainly the reality itſelf, the general ſpread of true piety among all ranks in a

commonwealth, muſt be attended with the moſt ſalutary effects. Its influence on the order, the regularity, the peace, and the harmony of a community, cannot fail of augmenting its felicity.

We ſee then, that beſide the ſpiritual and eternal advantages of true godlineſs, which the deſign of this diſcourſe will not admit of our conſidering, there are important benefits to be derived from it in the adminiſtration of civil government; and if generally and faithfully practiſed, it would moſt eſſentially contribute toward obtaining for, and ſecuring to a community all the valuable ends of ſuch an inſtitution.

If the preceding obſervations be juſt, then to maintain, that godlineſs is of no importance in a civil point of view—that gentlemen may be every way as well qualified, to act in any official character, in the government of a nation without, as with religion—that it is a matter of no conſequence to the political happineſs of a people, what religious ſyſtem, or whether any at all prevails among them,—to ſupport theſe, and ſimilar ſentiments, not only tends to the encouragement of immorality, but to the propagation of political hereſy. And in proportion to their prevalence, muſt be productive of the moſt dangerous conſequences. Without religion, a ſenſe of moral obligation can never be preſerved. And once deſtroy a ſenſe of moral obligation, and you ſtrike a deadly blow at the root of all mutual confidence between the different members of the community, and invite the ſpread of thoſe vices, which are moſt hoſtile to the political as well as eternal intereſt of mankind.

I feel a peculiar happineſs on this occaſion, in being able to confirm theſe ſentiments, by the authority of that moſt excellent man, that best of

PATRIOTS, whoſe diſtinguiſhed talents and eminent abilities, faithfully conſecrated to his country's ſervice, have not only in an unexampled manner endeared him to his fellow-citizens, but rendered him the object of the veneration of the world. From that valuable legacy of political experience and ſentiment, which he bequeathed to his country, in his addreſs accompanying his reſignation, I gladly introduce the following paſſages.

"OF all the diſpoſitions and habits, ſays he, "which lead to political proſperity, religion and "morality are indiſpenſible ſupports. In vain "would that man claim the tribute of patriotiſm, "who ſhould labor to ſubvert theſe great pillars of "human happineſs, theſe firmeſt props of the du-"ties of men and citizens. The mere politician "equally with the pious man ought to reſpect and "to cheriſh them. A volume could not trace all "their connections with private and public felicity. "Let it ſimply be aſked, where is the ſecurity for "property, for reputation, for life, if the ſenſe of "religious obligation deſert the oaths, which are "the inſtruments of inveſtigation in the courts of "juſtice? And let us with caution indulge the "ſuppoſition, that morality can be maintained "without religion. Whatever may be conceded "to the influence of refined education on minds of "a peculiar ſtructure; reaſon and experience both "forbid us to expect, that national morality can "prevail in excluſion of religious principle.

"IT is ſubſtantially true, that virtue or morality "is a neceſſary ſpring of popular government. "The rule indeed extends with more or leſs force "to every ſpecies of free government. Who that "is a ſincere friend to it, can look with indifferency "on attempts to ſhake the foundation of the fa-"bric?"

I CANNOT conclude this extract, without obſerving that the ſentiments it contains, in the view of every wiſe and good man, muſt add a luſtre to a character, already enrolled on the records of deathleſs fame, and the ſubject of a more univerſal admiration, and more extenſive eſteem, than any which the world hath hitherto produced. May America preſerve in everlaſting remembrance his political counſels—may they continue, through all ſucceeding generations, the fundamental maxims of their government—may his ſucceſſors be all animated by the ſame ſpirit of wiſdom, patriotiſm, firmneſs, and uncorruptible integrity—may he in the ſhades of retirement be conſtantly bleſſed with the ſpecial tokens of the divine favor—may ſelf-approving reflections on the part he has acted, and the ſpiritual joys of communion with God and Chriſt repay the ceaſeleſs toils and anxieties of his public life—and when heaven ſhall call him from his earthly abode, may he be admitted to a diſtinguiſhed ſeat in the paradiſe above.

PERMIT me to add, that if any thing can conſole us under the painful idea that WASHINGTON, no longer directs the helm of our government, it is the pleaſing reflection that we have for his ſucceſſor, a gentleman, not only of the firſt character for literary and political merit, wiſdom, firmneſs and independency of ſentiment, but one, who in the very moment of his inauguration, and in the preſence of both houſes of our national legiſlature, and a moſt crowded aſſembly of all ranks of ſpectators,* had the fortitude to avow his attachment to the chriſtian religion, and his fixed determination to conſider a decent reſpect for chriſtianity among the beſt recommendations for the public ſervice.

* See Preſident ADAMS's ſpeech at his inauguration.

But we ſuſpend theſe pleaſing reflections, and proceed to remark, that if the obſervations which have been made be juſt, the importance of ſupporting chriſtianity is undeniable. All the political benefits, which can be rationally expected from any religion ever taught in this world, may certainly be expected from the chriſtian, and in a much higher degree than from any other, in proportion to the ſuperior excellency of its moral precepts. The candid enemies of our faith confeſs, that the morality taught in the goſpel is the moſt pure, and the beſt adapted to the purpoſes of ſocial happineſs, of any moral ſyſtem ever publiſhed to men. If then ſome religion be neceſſary to anſwer the purpoſes of civil government, chriſtianity even on political views ought to be preferred to all others, as it poſſeſſes far the greateſt tendency to promote the important deſigns already mentioned. If its morals are the pureſt, its tendency to promote ſocial happineſs is the greateſt, and therefore good policy requires its ſupport.

It is not however our wiſh that any thing ſimilar to the religious eſtabliſhments of Europe, ſhould be introduced into our country. We hope never to ſee our magiſtrates employed, in preſcribing articles of faith; nor in the exerciſe of the leaſt coercive power to compel men to adopt this, or that creed, or ſubmit to any one mode of worſhip in preference to another. May liberty of conſcience, in this land, be never violated. But if there be important political advantages to be derived from chriſtianity, which cannot be ſo effectually ſecured by any other means, as appears evident from the preceding obſervations, then is it as much the duty of government to endeavour its preſervation, as in any other way to ſeek the public good. If every individual be left to chooſe for himſelf both with reſpect to doctrines, and modes of worſhip, laws made for the ſupport of public inſtruction, and the religious ob-

ſervation of the ſabbath, cannot in any proper ſenſe infringe on liberty of conſcience.

If religion then has a juſt claim to the protection of government, it muſt be peculiarly important to official characters. The more exalted gentlemen are in office, the more public and extenſive their ſphere of action, the more neceſſary is it, that their whole conduct ſhould exhibit undeniable evidence of their attachment to religion. The great body of the people look up to them, not only for examples in every virtue, but for that legiſlative encouragement to the cauſe of religion, on which its general proſperity under God muſt in a great meaſure depend. If godlineſs be profitable unto all things, if its political advantages be as great as has been repreſented, good policy will certainly lead to a preſervation of the laws for the ſupport of morality, to a maintenance and if need be, to an enlargement of the ſtatutes for the ſuppreſſion of vice, and to the appointment of ſuch men to fill the ſeveral offices under our government, as are known to be at leaſt men of unblemiſhed morals. A ſteady adherence to this rule would diſappoint the hopes of the wicked, and proportionably encourage thoſe of the virtuous. It would make our legiſlature a terror indeed to evil doers, and a praiſe to them who do well. Much depends on the conduct of rulers. To ſupport religion, law and liberty, is theirs. We live in a day when each of theſe have many foes. When the advocates of infidelity are loudly boaſting of the increaſe of their numbers—When licentiouſneſs is alarmingly prevalent, and when the federal conſtitution, the great palladium of our liberties, has been violently attacked. That amidſt all theſe internal evils, and the dangers which ariſe from foreign inſults and depredations, our rulers may be directed by unerring wiſdom—that they may ever poſſeſs that firmneſs and fidelity, which the arduous

duties of their ſtation, and the peculiar difficulties of the day require, is the ardent prayer of all their pious conſtituents. And ſupported by ſo important an encouragement, it is hoped, and expected that they will diſregard the unfounded clamours, of the enemies of religion and our country.

But beſides the ſupport which chriſtianity has a right to expect from government, it is of the higheſt importance, that it receive all encouragement from every claſs of citizens. In this buſineſs all ſhould be united, and extend as far, and as generally as poſſible the practice of true piety. If there were no futurity, if the race of men had been made only for this world, ſtill the univerſal practice of godlineſs would be a moſt deſirable object, and as ſuch muſt meet the ſincere approbation of every friend to his country. And if ſo, how inconceivably important indeed is it, when we are aſſured by a well authenticated revelation from heaven, that we are all acting not for time only, or principally, but for the rewards, or the puniſhments of an eternity. The motives to the choice and practice of godlineſs are immenſely great. Both temporal and eternal benefit, the promiſe of this life and of that which is to come, are all preſented to our view, and placed in a very conſpicuous light before our eyes, and nothing but the groſſeſt ſtupidity can prevent our feeling the force of them.

This ſubject leads me further to remark, that although the laws of our land have excuſed clergymen from the burdens of civil functions, and left them at liberty to devote their whole time to the buſineſs of their peculiar profeſſion, yet no body of men are more deeply intereſted in the proſperity of their country, or under greater obligations to conſtant exertions for that purpoſe. And happily their duty as chriſtian miniſters, and as members of civil ſocie-

ty perfectly coincide. In the former, which is the principal capacity in which they are called to act, they are pointedly commanded by their divine Maſter, to become *enſamples to the whole flock over which the Holy Ghoſt has made them overſeers, and to teach, rebuke and exhort with all long ſuffering and doctrine.* The firſt object of their labors is to prepare men for the kingdom of heaven. This they are to attempt by explaining to them the nature, and enforcing on them the importance of true godlineſs, and by perſuading them, if poſſible, to a faithful practice of it in all its branches. If they can effect this great purpoſe, they will not only benefit the ſouls of men, and advance the kingdom of the Redeemer in the world, but do a moſt important ſervice to civil ſociety. If they can become the happy inſtruments of leading thoſe among whom they labor, to forſake ſin, to embrace the goſpel, to love God and practiſe every branch of true piety; they will no doubt obey magiſtrates, and ſubmit themſelves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's ſake. The more we promote the intereſt of religion, the more ſhall we advance that of civil ſociety. The more ſpiritual good we do the ſouls of men, the more effectual aid ſhall we afford to the rulers of our land. Miniſters have every argument ſet before them, to excite them to diligence and fidelity, drawn from the temporal, and the eternal intereſt of men. And in addition to all this, they are further animated, by a conſideration of that future account which they muſt give of themſelves, before an aſſembled univerſe. Though the ſtupidity of this infidel age, may often excite in them the complaint of the evangelical prophet "that they labor in vain and ſpend their ſtrength for nought," yet let them not be weary in well doing, but perſevere with redoubled diligence, ſupported by the glorious hope that their labor will not be in vain in the Lord.

LASTLY, the foregoing obſervations point out to us all, the ſure means of promoting national happineſs. Public virtue, and political proſperity are intimately connected. Righteouſneſs will exalt, and vice bring ruin on a people. If then we are true patriots, if it is our glory *really to be*, as well as to be *eſteemed* the friends of our country, we ſhall devote ourſelves to the ſincere practice of true godlineſs; and in our ſeveral ſtations faithfully endeavour its univerſal promotion. Enmity to religion is inconſiſtent with true patriotiſm. They who are either publicly or privately undermining the foundation of piety toward God, are weakening the force of moral obligation, and aiming a fatal blow againſt the deareſt privileges reſulting from the ſocial compact. If we would wiſh to be a happy people, to enjoy in peace and tranquillity the bleſſings of a moſt excellent conſtitution, and to tranſmit thoſe fruits of ſuch vaſt expenſe of blood and treaſure unimpaired to poſterity, it is of the higheſt importance, that we practiſe true godlineſs; as every other expedient, while that is neglected, will be found utterly inſufficient.

IN one word, the choice and practice of religion is urged on us, by every conſideration which ought to affect a rational mind. Our duty to God, our country, and ourſelves require it—our intereſt and happineſs for time and eternity demand it of us. May God, of his infinite mercy grant us all, to experience it, in all its power, and in all its comforts and conſolations, for the ſake of the dear Redeemer. AMEN.

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